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TRAINING LEADERSHIP FOR THE FUTURE

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

A radio talk by C. W. Warburton, Director, Extension Work, U. S. Department of Agriculture, broadcast, Saturday, December 3, 1938, in the 4-H club period, National Farm and Home Program, by 99 stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company.

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My congratulations to Bonnie Phillips of Oklahoma and Oliver Larson of Minnesota, who have this week been awarded national recognition for leadership work in their communities and who spoke to you a few minutes ago. It is a fine thing to win recognition for work well done — I can think of no better basis for the making of an award.

If we are to make progress, we must have leadership. People often say that we need more leaders — particularly rural leaders. Undoubtedly. But I believe we need, all of us, some training and experience in leadership. I believe we would make better supporters of an idea or an undertaking if we knew something of the responsibilities needed to put the idea into practice or to get the undertaking accomplished — whether we, individually, did the leading or not.

There are countless things to be done in every community and seldom half enough people who are willing to "go ahead" on them. The more people a community has who will "go ahead" the more desirable that community is as a place to live and work. We might call this "everyday" leadership. When we older people studied history back in our school days, most of us took it for granted that the men and women we read about had spent their whole time doing the sort of thing that won them fame. Later we found that the great poet, perhaps, spent most of his time editing a newspaper or teaching school or earning his living some other way and only wrote the now famous poems during his spare moments. The signers of the Declaration of Independence had taken time out from what they looked upon as their every-day occupations to attend that history-making conference of 1776. And so on. These leaders had really performed countless duties, one or two of which put their names in history.

There will always be great need in our country for leadership in the every-day things and we shall succeed as communities and as a country in the measure that we have these leaders. Bonnie Phillips told us her club has had a membership of about thirty boys and girls each year for a number of years. And she explained that each of these members carries a demonstration in farming or homemaking which helped to bring improvement to the community. Oliver Larson said "Each member of our 4-H club can tell a story very much like ours." I believe that one of the important contributions 4-H club work makes to our country is this training of boys and girls to step into places of responsibility, serve well, either leading or giving assistance and incentive to someone else — training a million three hundred thousand in responsible "everyday" leadership.

Many things in 4-H training provide important experience leaders. One of these is standards of measurement. Every 4-H club member, even the youngest, has a standard for his piece of work — the calf he is feeding,

the corn he is growing, the garment she is making. The 4-H club member demonstrates his work according to standards, exhibits his products in competition with standards, judges everything in the realm of farming or homemaking according to definite standards, learns to measure his conduct as a 4-H member by a standard. Every boy or girl who remains in club work a reasonable time definitely understands the necessity for standards and has acquired the habit of working toward them. Surely this will help to develop qualities of leadership in the large number of 4-H boys and girls each year growing up to take their places in community affairs all over the country.

Then there is the experience that 4-H club members have in working together, sharing common interests, sharing responsibilities, learning to work together on problems too big to be tackled alone. Leaders must know how to cooperate with others, how to develop the spirit of cooperation in their fellows.

Four-H club work has been a part of the nation-wide cooperative extension work in agriculture and homemaking for the past twenty-five years or more. Boys and girls in 4-H clubs in the earlier years are now in their thirties or early forties. They are "in the saddle" and "going ahead" on many important undertakings for their communities. I am sure these former 4-H members have contributed to the leadership in the farm programs of today. With increasing numbers of these young people reach full stature as citizens each year, 4-H club work will continue to make an important contribution to forward-looking rural leadership.

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